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The Nelsons of Burnham Thorpe: a Record of a Norfolk Family, compiled from Unpublished Letters and Notebooks, 1787-1842.

By M. EYRE MATCHAM. (London and New York: John Lane Company. 1911. Pp. 306.)

BURNHAM THORPE is a Norfolk village of which the Rev. Edmund Nelson, the father of the celebrated admiral, Lord Nelson, was rector from 1755 to 1801. It was here that the admiral was born in 1758; here also his youngest and apparently favorite sister, Catherine, in 1767.

In 1787 Catherine married George Matcham, a retired East Indian official of handsome fortune. With her departure from home began a correspondence with her father which fixes the starting point in date of the volume before us. She kept his letters, which still exist; and from them the material of the book is largely drawn, though supplemented by note-books and other data. She outlived all her family, and her death in 1842 fixes the end of the book, she being the last of the Nelson generation that had found its home in Burnham Thorpe.

The interest of the book is mainly in the admission to the intimacies of a family private life, which in some degree formed the background of a great historical career. Of material for history there is very little, nor much even for biography; but those who receive pleasure from knowing something of the surroundings and personal relations of a distinguished man, whose public achievements have commanded their admiration, will be repaid by perusal. Such is the case with the present writer, and in that sense he commends the volume to others who may feel like himself.

Probably the most stimulating effect produced by the work is reflection upon the genesis of those great special—or specialized—aptitudes which we know vaguely as genius. That there was among the Nelsons of Burnham Thorpe a good average of strong character is fairly probable from the record spread before the reader; but nowhere among them does there seem to have been any capacity for achievement. Even in ordering matters of private life dependence appears to have been largely upon the future admiral; not merely, nor chiefly, in the days of his renown, when influence attached to his position, but before, when he was unknown. His energy, his faculty for accomplishment, were a mainstay. Nelson the admiral, and he alone in the family, was eminently one of those men who will arrive. He was so from first to last, and he was himself conscious of the fact. "I shall live to be envied" was one of his early utterances. What concurrence of obscure natural causes led up to this natural result, standing conspicuous, yet without precedent in a family line, before him, after him, and around him? In point of distinction of quality, he is without father, without mother, without descent, without family. The same ingredients, one may say, in all; but in none other anything approaching to, or even suggesting, the one exception. Does not genius, which is admitted, suggest an explanation of miracle?

Of mentions in the book some may be cited. We are told on the authority of George Matcham, the brother-in-law, that it was the earnest wish of the admiral that "whatever boys of mine might live to be of age, they would adopt any profession other than that of arms, either as sailors or soldiers". Doubt is cast again upon the much-vexed question of the paternity of Horatia, Nelson's "adopted" child; and it is said that the admiral and his wife were so uncongenial, because of her temperament, that separation would have taken place had no Lady Hamilton appeared. This also rests upon the authority of the first George Matcham. "Lauded, admired, and sought everywhere but at home, where complaining and reproach formed a sad contrast to the merited reception he met elsewhere, he naturally turned from the spot, his heart sickened and revolted, and at last was completely estranged." Yet not long before he left England for the station where the entanglement began he wrote in a private letter, "I am possessed of all that is valuable in a wife". In 1800, when the infatuation was complete and Nelson not yet returned to England, his father, then an invalid of seventy-eight, wrote to Catherine Matcham, "I am weak and enervated, but the mind is strong; the body well taken care of by the best advice and best of care, by the unabated attention of your good sister-in-law, who is the very counterpart of her great and good husband". In later life the Matchams and Lady Nelson were reconciled.

Some of Matcham's utterances on other matters are of more general interest. "Many foreigners conceive we (English) are an uncleanly race from our not having a warm bath in every gentleman's house. Are they quite wrong in their conjecture? Clean linen alone will not make a person clean. . . . Yet we see houses built at the expense of tens of thousands of pounds without the consideration of spending a few pounds for a bath; a defect which excites the ridicule of foreigners and the regrets of travelled Englishmen. . . . The (present) frequent change of linen I think is owing to our greater intercourse with India." Again, "Smoaking tobacco is in England a forbidden indulgence."

There are several portraits, and other illustrations, which will possess interest for those already interested in the admiral.

A. T. MAHAN.

William Pitt and National Revival. By J. HOLLAND ROSE, Litt. D. (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd. 1911. Pp. xii, 655.)

THIS scholarly work presents the results of a careful study of numerous original materials recently made available in addition to those used by Stanhope, 1862, since which no detailed biography of Pitt has appeared. Dr. Rose has used Foreign, War, Admiralty, and Home Office archives; the Pitt manuscripts now in the national archives, and those preserved in several private houses; the publications of the British Historical Manuscripts Commission; and many recent memoirs, in addition to the more familiar works. Parliamentary debates are used, though